DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 436 870 EC 307 543

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TITLE A Training Program To Prepare Teachers To Supervise and Work Effectively with Paraeducator Personnel. Fifth Edition.
INSTITUTION City Univ. of New York, NY. Center for Advanced Study in Education.
PUB DATE 1997-00-00
NOTE 77p.; See ED 274 135 and ED 357 515 for earlier editions of this guide.
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom - Teacher (052)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Administrative Principles; Administrator Role; *Classroom Techniques; *Disabilities; Elementary Secondary Education; Inservice Teacher Education; Instructional Materials; *Paraprofessional School Personnel; *Personnel Management; Postsecondary Education; Staff Development; Staff Role; Supervision; *Supervisory Training; *Teacher Role; Teamwork; Training

ABSTRACT

This project was designed to develop instructional materials to prepare teachers of students with disabling conditions and other professional personnel to assume responsibilities as classroom managers and supervisors. The first part of the manual contains information about the changing roles of teachers and paraprofessionals, responsibilities of administrators for supporting and preparing teachers to assume these responsibilities, and guidelines for using the materials to conduct trainings. The instructional modules cover the topics of: (1) the instructional team and the roles of the teachers and paraeducators; (2) management and supervision, the need for training in the process of management, and the teacher as classroom manager; (3) communication and team building, interactive skills, expressing feelings and providing feedback, non-assertive behavior, aggressive behavior, positive behavior, removing barriers to effective communication between teachers and paraeducators, and strategies for effective problem solving and decision making; (4) integrating the paraprofessional into the classroom through planning, setting goals and objectives, and directing and delegating; and (5) evaluating and coaching. The format for the instructional modules includes: instructional objectives, equipment and resources required, suggested training activities and exercises, background information for the trainer, and handouts and transparencies. (CR)

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A TRAINING PROGRAM TO PREPARE TEACHERS TO SUPERVISE AND WORK EFFECTIVELY WITH PARAEDUCATOR PERSONNEL

Anna Lou Pickett

THE NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER FOR PARAPROFESSIONALS IN EDUCATION AND RELATED SERVICES
CENTER FOR ADVANCED STUDY IN EDUCATION
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL AND UNIVERSITY CENTER
CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
5th Edition 1997

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PREPARING TEACHERS TO BE EFFECTIVE SUPERVISORS AND CLASSROOM MANAGERS

FRAMING THE ISSUES. As we move toward the 21st Century, public schools and other education provider agencies are respondents to and agents for change. Nationwide policy-makers, administrators, teachers and personnel developers are seeking more effective ways to meet the needs of increasing numbers of children and youth with and without disabilities who come from diverse racial and cultural heritages, speak hundreds of languages, or who come from family backgrounds that place them at risk for myriad reasons.

Many efforts underway to improve the quality of education systems and practices center on redefining the roles of teachers. Indeed, over the last two decades, new dimensions have been added to the traditionally recognized duties of teachers. No matter whether they work in early childhood home and center based settings, general, compensatory and special education or transition and occupational training programs, teachers are both instructors and education managers. In addition to their roles as diagnosticians of student needs, planners of age and ability level curriculum activities, orchestrators and facilitators of learning and assessors of student progress, teachers are also frontline managers with leadership responsibilities in instructional teams. These new management functions require teachers to assist in establishing education priorities and allocating human and other resources for their school or program, and to consult with colleagues on how best to deliver individualized education and related services to children and youth with a broad range of special needs and to confer regularly with parents.

As teachers spend more time on these expanded duties, less time is available for direct instruction. To take on these more complex duties, teachers require assistance and support from many sources including instructional paraeducators. Few teachers are prepared at either the graduate or undergraduate level to direct and delegate tasks to paraeducators, or to assess the potential for even greater utilization of paraeducators as one method for freeing teachers to more effectively carry out their new program and administrative functions.

PHILOSOPHY OF THE TRAINING. While there is increased recognition among personnel developers and trainers of the need to prepare general and special education teachers and professionals from other disciplines to consult with each other, make decisions jointly, share tasks and information, few efforts have centered on enhancing the unique relationships that exist between teachers and paraeducators. The curriculum content in this training program is designed to help teachers gain a better understanding of their new roles and to prepare them to supervise and work more effectively with paraeducators in various education settings.

The suggested training activities are based on the belief that meaningful training for adults must:

- ✓ relate directly to the identified needs of the participants.

- ✓ capitalize on life and work experiences of the participants.
- ✓ recognize the skills of participants.
- ✓ foster active participation of trainees by using problem solving, small group discussions, brainstorming, case studies and other activities.

STRATEGIES FOR CONDUCTING THE TRAINING. While the central core of the information in the units may be conveyed in a one or two day workshop, it is recommended that the training be conducted during five, three hour sessions or eight two hour sessions. This will provide participants with an opportunity to increase their understanding of issues and practices connected with directing the work of paraeducators, practice new skills and receive constructive feedback about their performance from the trainer.

As part of the training, instructors are encouraged to meet with each participant at least once before initiating the training to gather information about specific concerns and needs of the individual participants. This will enable the instructor to prioritize the topics to be addressed develop various approaches for encouraging participants to practice new skills.

Each of the units in the training program follows the same format. It includes: 1) an overview of the content, 2) instructional objectives for the unit, 3) equipment and background material the instructor will need during the session, 4) pre-session activities, 5) suggested training activities, 6) background material and 7) handouts and transparencies. In addition to the background material contained in the training program, trainers should consult other resources concerned with improving communication, problem solving, supervisory and on-the-job coaching skills of frontline managers.

THE INSTRUCTIONAL TEAM

OVERVIEW

Role definitions for both teachers and paraeducators are in a state of transition. The purpose of this unit is to provide teacher-trainees with an understanding of the important distinctions in the roles of teachers and paraeducators. The subsequent units will provide the trainees with the skills and knowledge they need to form partnerships with paraeducators that will benefit students. Employment of paraeducators in the education workforce has grown steadily and their duties have changed dramatically since they were introduced into classrooms as teacher aides almost four decades ago. Initially their duties were limited to recordkeeping, preparing materials and monitoring students on playgrounds, in study halls and in lunch rooms. In today's schools, paraeducators have become technicians and specialists who provide direct instructional, vocational, transitional, therapeutic, library, health and other related services to children and youth and in some cases their parents. Thus, they can more accurately be described as paraeducators just as their counterparts in law and medicine are designated as paralegals and paramedics. (In this training program we are using the terms paraeducator and paraprofessional interchangeably rather than referring to the myriad titles, such as instructional assistant, teacher aide, therapy assistant, instructional assistant, job coach, transition trainer, home visitor in use in school districts nationwide.)

INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES

The teacher will be able to:

1) Define the roles and duties of paraeducators.

2) Define the distinctions between the roles and responsibilities of teachers and paraeducators.

EQUIPMENT AND MATERIAL REQUIRED

- A flip chart and easel, or chalkboard.

- An overhead projector and screen, or if you prefer, write the information from the transparencies on the flip chart or chalkboard.

- Copies of the Background Material, Information Handouts, Exercises, and Transparencies for this unit.

- Information about programs in your district serving all children and youth with special needs and student enrollment in your district including: numbers of students 1) with limited English proficiency and those who come from diverse cultural heritages, 2) with disabilities served in inclusive classrooms and other programs, 3) placed in Title I or other remedial/compensatory programs, and other information that may help you describe reasons for increased reliance on paraeducators.

• Copies of: 1) job descriptions and personnel practices established by your district that influence the utilization, supervision, and functions of paraeducators; 2) copies of standards for professional, legal and ethical conduct established by your district for all employees and 3) information about statewide criteria/standards for the employment and training of paraeducators. (If guidelines or regulatory procedures have been established by the state department of education, they may include a certification/ permit system, mandated use of paraeducators in specific programs, or training requirements.)

BEFORE THE TRAINING BEGINS

• Obtain the information described above about practices, policies and regulatory procedures from your district or state department of education.

• Review the Background Materials, Information Handouts, Transparencies and suggested activities contained in this unit, compare the information with the policies and practices used in your district and/or state.

• Prepare a lecture that briefly describes: 1) reasons for increased use and expanding roles of paraeducators, 2) the contributions paraeducators make to the delivery of education services, and 3) distinctions in the roles of teachers and other professional personnel and the paraeducators.

• Review the activities and exercises provided in this training program; select those that are most relevant to the needs of the trainees.

DURING THE TRAINING SESSION

¶ Begin the session by delivering the opening lecture. Be sure to stress the duties of teachers as frontline managers and supervisors of paraeducators; and the evolution of the roles of paraeducators from teacher aides to active participants in all phases of the instructional process. (You may want to use the content in Transparencies 1 & 2 as an outline.)

¶ Divide the participants into groups of 3 or 4. If they work in different schools or specialty areas organize the groups so they include representatives from the various programmatic areas and/or buildings. Ask the groups to work together and: 1) compile a list of daily, weekly, periodic tasks performed by paraeducators in their classrooms or programs and 2) make a list of the duties of teachers and/or other professional personnel that are <u>not</u> performed by paraeducators.

¶ Ask for a volunteer from one group to read the list of tasks performed by paraeducators and record the items on the flipchart or chalkboard. Ask for the other groups to add items not included in the list.

¶ Ask for a volunteer from another group to report on duties performed by teachers that are not the responsibility of paraeducators. (You may want to supplement the lists based on district policies or practices.)

¶ Distribute Exercise 1. Ask the participants to work alone and read each situation and decide whether it is an appropriate or inappropriate duty for paraeducators, and then to circle the letter that most accurately describes their feelings. Be sure they understand that it is O.K. to be unsure and that their responses may be different from other participants based on their years of experience or other factors.

¶ When the different activities are completed, lead a discussion that addresses the distinctions in the roles of teachers and paraeducators. Be sure to answer questions and concerns raised by the group and make sure the participants understand district policies and practices that have an impact on the roles and duties of teachers and paraeducators.

THE INSTRUCTIONAL TEAM

ROLES OF TEACHERS. In today's classrooms, teachers are supervisors of human resources and program managers. The term "classroom teacher" no longer adequately defines or embodies the expanding responsibilities teachers have in education. Analysis of the daily functions of teachers finds that major portions of their time are spent in consultation with colleagues, program planning, and administrative tasks. In addition to these programmatic duties, their responsibilities now include supervising and coordinating the work of paraeducators and other support personnel. They: 1) set goals and plan for paraeducators and other adults working in the classroom and program; 2) schedule and assign duties to paraeducators; 3) direct and monitor the day to day work of paraeducators; 4) provide feedback about a paraeducator's on-the-job performance; and 5) provide on-the-job coaching for paraeducators.

There are many reasons for this evolution in teacher roles and responsibilities. They include: 1) the changing demographics in our nation's schools, 2) legislative actions requiring local school districts to provide services to all children and youth who can benefit from individualized education programs and personalized assistance, and 3) continuing efforts to involve teachers in school-based decision making and school governance.

Clear distinctions between the roles of teachers and paraeducators must be made in order for a team to work together as an effective unit. It is the teacher who has the responsibility for the education of the students, no matter whether it takes place in classrooms or community learning environments. Even when tasks are delegated to paraeducators and mutually decided on by the team, it is the teacher who retains responsibility for: 1) diagnosing students education needs, 2) determining instructional objectives, 3) developing lesson plans, 4) modifying curriculum content and activities, and 5) evaluating student performance. The term "paraeducator" is indicative of the role of paraeducators. "Para" means "alongside of" and paraeducators do work alongside their professional colleagues in all phases of the instructional process and the delivery of related services to students and their parents.

ROLES OF PARAEDUCATORS. Paraeducators work alongside professional colleagues and provide direct services to child and youth with and without disabilities, who have limited English or require compensatory education for other reasons. They are also integral members of early childhood provider teams and increasingly they are assigned to work in secondary transition and occupational services. They provide opportunities for students to practice skills in community learning environments, facilitate the inclusion of students with disabilities into general education, work in computer laboratories and libraries, provide health services, and monitor playgrounds,

*Material in this unit is adapted from: Pickett, A.L., Faison, K. and Formanek, J. (1993). "A Core Curriculum and Training Program to Prepare Paraeducators to Work in Inclusive Classrooms for School Age Students". National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals in Education and Related Services, Center for Advanced Study in Education, Graduate School & University Center, City University of New York.

lunchrooms and study halls. And, increasingly they assist speech, occupational and physical therapists in the delivery of these related services. Under the supervision of teachers or other professional practitioners, paraeducators: 1) observe and document information about student performance and behavior and carry out other functional assessment activities; 2) provide instruction to students; and 3) assist with the implementation of behavior management programs for individual students.

CONTRIBUTIONS OF PARAEDUCATORS. There are several ways paraeducators help to improve the quality of educational programs and instructional activities. Probably the most important contribution they make is to enable teachers to concentrate on meeting instructional objectives for individuals as well as small groups of students. Paraeducators enhance the quality of instruction and other activities in the following ways: 1) the educational program becomes more student oriented and flexibility within the classroom or another education setting is increased; 2) increased individualized/personalized instruction for students is available; 3) students benefit from extra "eyes and ears" that are alert to individual needs and problems, and 4) teachers have more time to: a) study and assess the needs of each student; b) confer with parents and colleagues; c) diagnose problems; d) prepare and plan for individualized instruction; e) try a broader range of teaching techniques and strategies, and f) evaluate the progress of each student.

Transparencies and handouts containing the definition of the term paraeducator, distinctions in the roles of teachers and paraeducators, and exercises follow.

REASONS FOR EXPANDED PARAEDUCATOR EMPLOYMENT

- ✔ CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS
- ✔ FEDERAL & STATE LEGISLATIVE ACTIONS
- ✔ INCREASING NUMBERS OF CHILDREN & YOUTH WHO CAN BENEFIT FROM INDIVIDUALIZED ASSISTANCE
- ✔ CHANGING ROLES OF TEACHERS

ROLES OF TEACHERS

THEY ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR:

- ✔ **ASSESSING STUDENT PERFORMANCE LEVELS AND DIAGNOSING EDUCATION NEEDS**
- ✔ **CONSULTING WITH COLLEAGUES AND PARTICIPATING IN THE PREPARATION OF EDUCATION PLANS**
- ✔ **DEVELOPING INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES AND PREPARING LESSON PLANS**
- ✔ **MODIFYING INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS & CURRICULUM FOR INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS**
- ✔ **IMPLEMENTING INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS ALONG WITH PARAEDUCATORS**
- ✔ **EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PROGRAMS & STUDENT PERFORMANCE**
- ✔ **INVOLVING PARENTS IN ALL ASPECTS OF THEIR CHILD'S EDUCATION**
- ✔ **SUPERVISING THE WORK OF PARAEDUCATORS AND OTHER SUPPORT STAFF**

PARAEDUCATORS: A DEFINITION

PARAEDUCATORS ARE SCHOOL EMPLOYEES:

1. WHOSE POSITIONS ARE EITHER INSTRUCTIONAL IN NATURE, OR WHO DELIVER OTHER DIRECT SERVICES TO STUDENTS AND/OR THEIR PARENTS; AND

2. WHO WORK UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF TEACHERS OR OTHER PROFESSIONAL STAFF WHO ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DESIGN, IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION OF INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS AND STUDENT PROGRESS.

ROLES OF TEACHERS

Teachers are responsible for:

- ✓ **Assessing the performance levels of students.**
- ✓ **Consulting with other professional colleagues and participating in the preparation of individualized education plans.**
- ✓ **Developing instructional objectives for individual students and the entire class.**
- ✓ **Modifying curriculum and instructional strategies to meet the identified needs of individual students.**
- ✓ **Implementing instructional programs along with paraeducators and other professional personnel.**
- ✓ **Evaluating the effectiveness of programs.**
- ✓ **Involving parents in all aspects of their child's education.**
- ✓ **Coordinating and supervising the work of paraeducators and other support staff.**

PARAEDUCATORS: A DEFINITION

Paraeducators are employees: 1) whose positions are either instructional in nature or who deliver other direct services to students and/or their parents; and 2) who serve in a position for which a teacher or other professional staff have responsibility for the design, implementation and evaluation of instructional programs and student progress.

Paraeducators provide services in the following programmatic areas: educational programs, physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech/language pathology, early intervention and preschool programs, social work/case management, parent training/child find programs, transition training, supported employment or other vocational education programs, libraries, and health services.

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*Information in this handout is based on material contained in Pickett, A.L., Faison, K. and Formanek, J. (1993). "A Core Curriculum and Training Program to Prepare Paraeducators to Work in Inclusive Classrooms for School Age Students". National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals in Education and Related Services, Center for Advanced Study in Education, Graduate School & University Center, City University of New York.

DUTIES PERFORMED BY INSTRUCTIONAL PARAEDUCATORS

Paraeducators participate as active team members by:

- ✓ **Instructing individual and small groups of students following programs and lessons developed by teachers.**
- ✓ **Working with teachers to modify instructional strategies and curriculum content to meet the needs of individual students.**
- ✓ **Assisting with supplementary work for students and supervising independent study.**
- ✓ **Reinforcing lessons with small groups of students.**
- ✓ **Assisting with the preparation of materials.**
- ✓ **Performing informal and functional assessment activities, scoring objectives tests and keeping appropriate records.**
- ✓ **Assisting teachers in collecting and maintaining data about student behavior and performance.**
- ✓ **Implementing behavioral management programs developed for individual students.**
- ✓ **Assisting teachers with crisis intervention and discipline.**
- ✓ **Attending staff meetings at the request of a teacher or administrative personnel.**

In addition paraeducators may be asked to: 1) perform bus duty; 2) supervise playgrounds and lunchrooms; 3) assist students with personal and hygienic care; 4) set up and maintain adaptive equipment and learning centers, and 5) operate office or video equipment.

ROLES OF THE PARAEDUCATOR*

Below are descriptions of some situations an instructional team might encounter in their day to day work. **DIRECTIONS:** Circle **A** if you think the activity/function is an appropriate duty/role for a paraeducator; Circle **I** if you think it is inappropriate; or **U** if you are unsure. Briefly describe why you responded the way you did and be prepared to discuss your reasons with other participants.

A I U

Peggy, a student with physical and developmental disabilities, has been integrated into regular math, language arts, and social studies classes. Her IEP calls for the paraeducator to accompany and stay with her in case she needs assistance. The math teacher asks the paraeducator to run off worksheets for the entire class, and the social studies teacher asks her to assist other students on group projects or individual special assignments.

Reason:

A I U

It is 1:00 in the afternoon and the teacher has become ill. Both the paraeducator and the principal know she needs to go home immediately. The principal asks the paraeducator to take charge of the class for the rest of the afternoon.

Reason:

***The concept for this activity was originated by Lowell Alexander, an administrator in the Wyandotte County Special Education Cooperative, Kansas.**

A I U

It is the end of the year, the teacher has scored the final exams and completed the annual reviews of student performance. She asks the paraeducator to enter them into the individual student's master files.

Reason:

A I U

There are several students in the class who have limited English. The paraeducator is fluent in their native language. The teacher asks the paraeducator to review and reinforce lessons with them. He describes the teaching strategies and the instructional materials he wants the paraeducator to use with the individual students. He also asks the paraeducator to observe and record information about how each student responds to the lessons and whether or not the students are making progress in learning to speak English. From time to time the teacher also asks the paraeducator to accompany him on home visits or attend meetings with the parents.

Reason:

A I U

The teacher and paraeducator have worked together for several years. The teacher knows that the paraeducator has extraordinary musical talents. She asks the paraeducator to decide what the class should do for the Spring Music Festival and to rehearse them.

Reason:

MANAGEMENT AND SUPERVISION

OVERVIEW

Teachers must be aware of and fully understand how complex their roles and responsibilities have become. They must have supervisory and management skills that will enable them to integrate paraeducators and other support personnel into day to day classroom activities and routines ranging from non-instructional chores to active participation in the instructional process. The material and exercises in this unit are divided into two sections. The introductory activities will provide the participants with information about the responsibilities of the teacher as a classroom manager. The final activity will enable individual trainees to: 1) look at their current mode of management and supervision, and 2) identify their individual strengths as classroom managers and identify skills they need to improve.

INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES

Teachers will be able to:

1) Discuss their feelings about supervising and integrating another adult into the classroom.

2) Describe the management (supervisory) functions of teachers.

3) Describe the qualities of a good supervisor.

4) Examine and identify their individual strengths and weaknesses as a classroom manager.

EQUIPMENT AND MATERIALS REQUIRED

To conduct the activities in this unit you will need:

- An easel and flipchart or chalkboard.
- An overhead projector or if you prefer write contents of the transparency on the flipchart or easel.
- Transparency 1 "Managerial (Supervisory) Concerns and Functions".
- Copies of Handout 1 "The Process & Activities of Management in the Classroom" for each participant, and
- Copies of Handout 2 "Performance and Skills Survey" for each participant.

BEFORE THE TRAINING BEGINS

- Review the Background Material and prepare a lecture on the roles and responsibilities of teachers as classroom managers. Use the items on Transparency 1 as an outline.

- Duplicate enough copies of the Handouts for all participants.

DURING THE TRAINING SESSION

¶ Prior to delivering the lecture ask the trainees to share their feelings and attitudes about working with a paraeducator and other support personnel, and being responsible for their supervision, evaluation and integration into the instructional process.

¶ Distribute Handout 1 and deliver the brief lecture on management skills required by teachers.

¶ Divide the trainees into small groups of 4 or 5. Ask them to identify and list specific supervisory and management tasks they perform daily or weekly.

¶ Ask for a volunteer from one of the groups to share the list and record responses on the flipchart or chalkboard. Discuss the responses and ask other groups to share items not on the list.

¶ Distribute Handout 2 the "Performance and Skills Survey" to the trainees. Review the directions. Stress the following: 1) this is not a test and there are no right or wrong answers; and 2) the results of this inventory will serve as a tool for determining the trainees strengths as a supervisor, communicator, evaluator and coach as well as determining areas where training is needed. Allow 20-25 minutes for the trainees to complete the survey.

¶ Divide the participants into small groups of 4-6 people matching experienced teachers with new teachers. Ask the groups to discuss their responses to the items on the Skills Survey and to share ideas about supervisory techniques they have found effective.

MANAGEMENT AND SUPERVISION

THE NEED FOR TRAINING IN THE PROCESS OF MANAGEMENT. Few teachers are prepared during their undergraduate or graduate education to work with other adults in the classroom. They are not trained to supervise paraeducators, to assign and delegate appropriate responsibilities, to evaluate on-the-job performance, assess the training needs of paraeducators or to develop strategies to meet these identified needs. Many teachers have concerns that are usually left unspoken about being responsible for integrating other adults into the classroom. Others may verbalize their "fears" by saying "I'm a loner", "I prefer not to have another person in my room", or "if I do things myself then I know they will be done right", or "I'm a teacher not a boss", or "I don't want to be responsible for judging someone."

These concerns and feelings are an occupational hazard for all of us in education. The problems probably have two sources. The first is our traditional attitude about safeguarding the freedom and individuality of teachers and the feelings of ownership teachers have about "my class", "my kids", "my programs". The second is often linked to a personal reaction to being observed and evaluated by a supervisor who did not clarify the criteria they were using, or who did not provide feedback about the results of the assessment.

THE TEACHER AS CLASSROOM MANAGER. As noted earlier, the term "classroom teacher" no longer defines or embodies the expanded duties teachers are responsible for. Instead teachers are more appropriately described as "classroom managers." Analysis of responsibilities that comprise all aspects of teacher's duties finds that a major portion of their time is spent on management tasks and functions including planning, organizing and evaluating.

Over the last decade new dimensions have been added to the traditionally recognized roles of teachers. As a result, teachers require management skills that will enable them to integrate paraeducators and other support personnel into the day-to-day activities of the classroom. These skills include: determining how the team will operate, how decisions will be made, and who will be responsible for what tasks. (Use Transparency 1 as an outline.)

Learning to solve problems, to delegate and share duties, and to instruct paraeducators on how to carry out assigned tasks will make the teacher's job easier and the instructional process more productive. In addition to these skills, the teacher must demonstrate an ability to motivate adults to do their job better by creating a positive work climate. The following qualities will enhance the ability of the teacher to be a good supervisor: **tact** (the ability to get a person to do tasks willingly); **fairness** (having an open mind and being willing to listen, acknowledging and giving credit for productive ideas, praising a job well done, not expecting others to do what s/he wouldn't do); **thoroughness** (making certain the job is completed and the instructional or other objectives are met); **common sense** (getting the facts, thinking about the impact of possible changes in schedules, programs, and assignments on the team, and then acting); and **concern** (giving attention to the needs of paraeducators, listening to their ideas, and providing the information paraeducators need to perform their assigned tasks.)

TEACHER SUPERVISORY FUNCTIONS

PLANNING FOR AND SCHEDULING PARAEDUCATOR ASSIGNMENTS

COMMUNICATION AND TEAM BUILDING

DIRECTING AND DELEGATING

EVALUATING ON-THE-JOB PERFORMANCE

PROVIDING ON-THE-JOB TRAINING/COACHING

THE PROCESS AND ACTIVITIES OF MANAGEMENT IN THE CLASSROOM

The need to provide improved and increased individualized education services to children and youth who may have learning and other disabilities, limited English proficiency, or who may require personalized instruction for other reasons has brought about major changes in the roles and duties assigned to teachers. Not only are they responsible for developing instructional goals and programs to achieve the goals for children and youth they work with, they are also responsible for planning, for directing and evaluating the work of paraeducators and other support personnel including peer tutors and volunteers, and providing on-the-job coaching. While planning programs for students and implementing them requires management skills, these functions need to be refocused and adapted to prepare teachers to supervise and work more effectively with another adult in the classroom.

When teachers examine and analyze the tasks they perform, they find that much of their time is spent in planning, scheduling, coordinating/supervising, and evaluating. Teachers plan and schedule activities for students, themselves, paraeducators, and others. They develop instructional objectives for each student and then prepare weekly and daily lesson plans to achieve these objectives. They decide what human and physical resources are needed to implement the instructional program for each student. They assign appropriate tasks to paraeducators and other support personnel and set performance and work standards. They hold conferences with parents to involve them in all aspects of their child's education. They evaluate how well everything is working and determine what changes need to be made in the program plans for students, schedules, or work assignments for the paraeducators.

Learning to solve problems, to delegate and share duties, and to instruct paraeducators on how to carry out assigned tasks will make the teacher's job easier and the instructional process more productive. In addition to these skills, the teacher must demonstrate an ability to motivate adults to do their job better by creating a positive work climate. The following qualities will enhance the ability of the teacher to be a good supervisor; **tact** (the ability to get a person to do tasks willingly); **fairness** (having an open mind and being willing to listen, acknowledging and giving credit for productive ideas, praising a job well done, not expecting others to do what s/he wouldn't do); **thoroughness** (making certain the job is completed and the instructional or other objectives are met); **common sense** (getting the facts, thinking about the impact of possible changes in programs, schedules, and assignments on the team, and then acting); and **concern** (giving attention to the needs of paraeducators, listening to their ideas, and providing the information paraeducators need to perform their assigned tasks.)

A PERFORMANCE/SKILLS SURVEY FOR TEACHER-MANAGERS

Directions:

1. This is **NOT** a test! There are no right or wrong answers. This inventory should be used as a tool to start you thinking about your strengths as a planner, manager, communicator and evaluator, and to help you determine those areas where training and changes are needed.

2. Circle the number to the right of each item which best describes the way you work as a classroom manager. The way you perform your duties may be affected by several factors, including your attitudes, policies and regulations of the school district, the needs of the students, and the personnel assigned to work with you. **THEREFORE**, keep the requirements of your job in mind as you complete this inventory.

3. Save this survey, it will be used later in the program as a data source for another activity.

As a classroom manager, to what extent do you:

	never		occasionally		regularly
1. meet regularly with the paraeducator to communicate goals and objectives for each student?	1	2	3	4	5
2. plan and revise weekly schedules and job assignments for the paraeducator based on changing student goals and program objectives?	1	2	3	4	5
3. describe and demonstrate the specific instructional methods, strategies and materials you want the paraeducator to use to achieve the goals and objectives established for individual students?	1	2	3	4	5
4. describe and demonstrate the specific behavior management and/or disciplinary methods you want the paraeducator to use with an individual student?	1	2	3	4	5

(continued)

	never		occasionally		regularly
5. provide opportunities for the paraeducator to practice a new skill while you observe the activity?	1	2	3	4	5
6. help the paraeducator learn through constructive feedback?	1	2	3	4	5
7. make assignments and delegate tasks based on skills demonstrated by the paraeducator?	1	2	3	4	5

As a classroom manager, to what extent do you:

	never		occasionally		regularly
1. involve the paraeducator in determining the causes of job or classroom related problems?	1	2	3	4	5
2. involve the paraeducator in making decisions about how to solve problems?	1	2	3	4	5
3. make plans to implement an agreed upon solution?	1	2	3	4	5
4. check to see if the solution is working and determine if not, why not?	1	2	3	4	5

As a classroom manager, to what extent do you:

	never		occasionally		regularly
1. share information with the paraeducator about your teaching and supervisory styles?	1	2	3	4	5

(continued)

	never		occasionally		regularly
2. learn about skills or talents the paraeducator may have that will enhance the instructional process and other classroom activities?	1	2	3	4	5
3. encourage paraeducators to share ideas with you about ways to improve the work of the instructional team?	1	2	3	4	5
4. make sure that students, parents and other school staff recognize the paraeducator as an important education team member?	1	2	3	4	5
5. model high standards of professional conduct for the paraeducator to follow (e.g. maintain confidentiality, respect for human and legal rights of students and parents)?	1	2	3	4	5

As a classroom manager, to what extent do you:

	never		occasionally		regularly
1. make sure that the paraeducator is aware of the criteria you or another evaluator will use to assess his/her performance?	1	2	3	4	5
2. meet at regularly scheduled times to provide feedback to the paraeducator about his/her performance?	1	2	3	4	5
3. give sincere praise when earned?	1	2	3	4	5
4. back up an evaluation of on-the-job performance with specific examples of behavior?	1	2	3	4	5
5. ask the principal to make time available for you to meet regularly with the paraeducators?	1	2	3	4	5
6. ask the principal or other supervisory personnel for assistance in addressing problems that may exist between you and the paraeducator?	1	2	3	4	5

COMMUNICATION AND TEAM BUILDING

OVERVIEW

Among the most important keys to successful integration of paraeducators into the instructional team are effective communication skills. The communication skills required by both teachers and paraeducators are the same and are intertwined with social skills, coping skills, helping skills, listening skills and problem solving skills. These skills do not develop automatically. They must be learned, practiced and nurtured.

INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES

Teachers will be able to:

1) Assess their own individual strengths in the areas of communication and problem solving and identify skills they want to strengthen.

2) Identify information paraeducators need to know about teachers.

3) Increase their ability to listen and to share expectations, feelings and ideas with paraeducators, other colleagues, parents and students.

EQUIPMENT AND MATERIALS REQUIRED

- Flipchart and easel or chalkboard.

- Overhead projector and screen or if you prefer write the information contained in the Transparencies on the flipchart or chalkboard.

- Transparencies.

- Copies of the Handouts and Exercises for all participants.

BEFORE THE TRAINING

- Review the Background Information, Handouts, Exercises and other activities as well as other resources you may know about that are designed to improve communication and problem solving skills.

- Select the activities most appropriate to the needs of the participants.

- Prepare a series of brief lectures: describing the ways we communicate, stressing the value and importance of using effective communication and listening skills to increase self-esteem, cope with stress and working together to solve problems.

DURING THE SESSION

¶ Introduce and distribute Exercise 1, "The Social Skills Inventory". Stress that this is not a test and is designed to enable participants to identify social/communication skills they would like to strengthen. This activity usually generates a great deal of discussion, so allow plenty of time to respond to questions and concerns.

¶ Ask participants to brainstorm ways people share ideas, information and attitudes with each other.

¶ Deliver the lecture on the value of practicing active listening and positive/assertive communication skills. Be sure to define distinctions in aggressive, assertive and non-assertive communication. (Use Transparencies #1 & 2 as guides for the discussion.)

¶ Distribute Information Handouts 1, 2 and 3, "Listening Skills," "Basic Strategies for Clear Communication Between Teachers and Paraeducators," and "What Paraeducators Need to Know About Teachers."

¶ Lead a discussion of factors that may create barriers to the development of mutual respect and trust and open communication (e.g. age/generational differences, unfamiliarity with another person's cultural heritage and customs, religious beliefs, value systems and levels of education).

¶ Divide participants into groups of 6 or 7 and ask them to work together to develop a list of terms and jargon they feel paraeducators need to know and understand to be effective team members. Ask all groups to share their lists with the other participants.

¶ Distribute Information Handout 4, "Interpersonal Problem Solving." Briefly discuss the approach to problem solving.

¶ Divide the participants into groups of 4 or 5. Distribute one of the Role Plays and the Worksheet to each group. Ask the groups to use the five step method for problem solving to identify problems and develop solutions. When they have completed the first part of the activity ask them to prepare a script that incorporates the problems and solutions and be prepared to present it to the class. (The Worksheet will serve as a guide for identifying the problems confronting the people in the situation and preparing a script.) Suggest that participants who play the different characters use passive, aggressive or assertive methods of communication, depending on how they think the character would react in this situation.

¶ After each group has presented its role play, lead a discussion with all participants about their reactions to the communication methods used by the participants and the solutions.

¶ Distribute Exercise 3, Improving the Effectiveness of the Instructional Team. Ask the participants to complete it in order to develop strategies they can use to strengthen the team.

COMMUNICATION AND TEAM BUILDING*

COMMUNICATION SKILLS.* Each of us has our own style of communicating and interacting with others. We convey our ideas and attitudes verbally and non-verbally. We use oral, written, sign and body language to share information, indicate respect or a lack of respect, support, and reveal emotions. Effective communication is an integral part of the social skills we require to make and keep friends, avoid living in isolation, cope with stress, deal with feelings and maintain control over our environment. To convey messages we want others to receive requires different types of skills. They include:

INTERACTIVE SKILLS. These are the skills that enable us to be comfortable with other people, to let people know they are important, that we are interested in them and what they are saying, that we respect their ideas. Among the ways we demonstrate interactive behavior is by maintaining eye contact, asking questions, commenting on and paraphrasing what other people are saying.

Listening is active and hard work. It is the skill that allows us to hear and understand the ideas, feelings, needs, and requests for help from other people. There are many factors that may affect our ability to receive messages others send us. They include: environmental causes such as uncomfortable seats, noise, poor lighting, extreme temperatures. Other factors may range from personal biases, to preconceived attitudes about the speaker or circumstances, to individual value systems, to changing moods, to short attention spans. In order for us to listen effectively and hear what someone is saying to us, we need to try to prevent prejudice and anger from distorting reception; be willing to consider new ideas; and ask speakers to clarify what they are saying if we do not fully understand them. (See Information Handout #1 for more information about effective listening skills.)

EXPRESSING FEELINGS AND PROVIDING FEEDBACK. Interpersonal skills enable us to share our emotions and ideas honestly and fully with others and to have respect for the feelings, values and cultural heritages of others. They also allow us to relate effectively and avoid miscommunications that may lead to disagreements with our co-workers, families, friends, the children we work with, colleagues and other people we come into contact with daily.

Positive communication training is one approach for helping individuals strengthen communication, coping and problem solving skills. Typically communication styles used by most people fall into three basic categories including:

*Some of this material has been adapted from: Pickett, A.L., Faison, K. and Formanek, J. (1993) A Core Curriculum & Training Program to Prepare Paraeducators to Work in Inclusive Classrooms Serving School Age Students with Disabilities. National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals in Education and Related Services, Center for Advanced Study in Education, Graduate School & University Center, City University of New York.

NON-ASSERTIVE (PASSIVE) BEHAVIOR. Acting non-assertively is an ineffective way of communicating. Individuals who are generally non-assertive have difficulty expressing opinions, beliefs and feelings. They do not stand up for their legitimate rights and may feel as though they are being taken advantage of by others. People who do not share their insights, feelings and thoughts frequently withhold valuable information from others thus preventing change and hindering the growth of relationships.

AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR. Acting aggressively is another ineffective way of communicating. People who respond aggressively violate the rights of others and do not respect the feelings and contributions of others. They frequently try to "score points" by yelling, being sarcastic, using the put down and humiliating others. People who demonstrate aggressive behaviors frequently try to impose their attitudes and values on others and in many cases criticize the person rather than their actions. Many people confuse assertion and aggression. It is important to recognize the differences and learn to be assertive rather than aggressive.

POSITIVE/ASSERTIVE BEHAVIOR. Assertive behavior allows each of us to stand up for our legitimate rights. It involves the ability to express thoughts and feelings in an honest, straight-forward fashion that shows respect for others. Being assertive does not mean using the same style all the time. At times assertive individuals may use "I messages" e.g. I believe, I feel, I think. At other times assertive people may use humor, or sometimes they may use special knowledge and serve as an expert. People who have assertive skills are able to monitor and choose behaviors that will be effective in a particular situation or when they relate to a specific individual.

REMOVING BARRIERS TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN TEACHERS AND PARAEDUCATORS. The assumption is all too often made that one classroom or education program is pretty much like any other. Nothing is further from the truth. Schools and classrooms reflect the attitudes and styles of the principals and faculty, the special needs of the students, community values, and cultural factors. Therefore, it is important for teachers to provide an overview and orientation to paraeducators about the philosophy of the school, personnel practices and procedures that all staff members are expected to follow no matter whether they spend most of their time in a classroom or another teaching/learning environment.

Of more direct consequence for the instructional team is the need for teachers to clarify for paraeducators the structure, the methods and the techniques they prefer to use in all phases of classroom and program management. All teachers have a style of their own. One teacher may be very structured and provide specific directions based on rules, procedures and the individuals supervisory/management style. Another may ask a paraeducator to share ideas and information and participate in the decision making/ planning process. Still a third person may tend to be non-directive and prefer the paraprofessional to learn by observing what the teacher does and then to model the behavior. Without mutual awareness and understanding of these idiosyncrasies the effectiveness of the team will be undermined. (See Information Handouts 1, 2, and 3 at the end of this unit for additional information.)

A major problem that may impede the development of a strong team effort is a lack of a common base of reference and understanding. Education professionals tend to know and use the same jargon in connection with student performance, assessment techniques, program planning and educational methods. Frequently the jargon becomes a form of shorthand and "educationalese" that allows professionals to communicate comfortably with each other while excluding others from participating in the educational process (e.g. parents, students, paraeducators).

In addition to the need for the instructional team members to develop and strengthen verbal communication skills, they also need to develop a set of non-verbal cues that will enable them to reduce disruptions in all phases of the daily routine. By systematically using silent cues that do not require oral directions and responses to problems in the midst of instructional activities, the team will be able to increase productivity, operate more efficiently in a crisis-situation, and establish a positive approach to communication in the classroom, worksites or other learning centers.

STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE PROBLEM SOLVING AND DECISION MAKING. Many times, because of the pressures of other duties education teams may ignore or postpone dealing with a problem that involves disagreements or conflicts with the other adults with whom they work. In many cases this may accentuate differences among individuals. It is necessary for the people involved to work together to decide on a course of action. Finding mutually acceptable solutions is not always easy, and the responsibility for developing effective procedures for alleviating problems are likely to be left to teachers and paraeducators with little outside assistance or support.

The following are a series of steps that teacher and paraeducator teams can use to improve their ability to work together. While this approach to problem solving is based on people working together to achieve consensus, there are in fact times when it is necessary for teachers and other school professionals to make decisions that paraeducators may not always fully appreciate, or agree with. However, by maintaining open lines of communication and mutual trust these problems should be few and far between. The problem solving technique described here is based on a 5 step approach.

STEP ONE - IDENTIFYING AND DESCRIBING THE PROBLEM. A situation must be clearly understood. If concerns and issues cannot be stated clearly, it is impossible to choose a course of action that will lead to a satisfactory solution. Everyone involved in a situation or participating in team efforts, should describe the problem in their own words and from their own point of view. This may be done by asking and answering these questions. What is the problem? Who is involved? Who is affected? How are they affected?

STEP TWO - DEFINING AND DETERMINING THE CAUSES OF THE PROBLEM. It is not enough to identify the problem. It is essential to determine what has created the problem and the factors that cause it to persist. For example, the problem may be caused by "outside conditions" (contractual agreements, a lack of financial resources) that an instructional team may have little ability to change, or it may have its roots in a lack of understanding of the distinction between the roles and duties of teachers, other professional personnel and paraeducators. Other factors that may influence how a problem is defined may include differences in values and attitudes, age, work experience and education, cultural heritage or religious beliefs. Still other concerns may be connected to changes in education systems and practices, efforts to provide education services in community based learning environments, or the need to involve parents and other caregivers in all aspects of their child's education. It is important that the real problem be separated from surface events so that areas of agreement and disagreement may be identified.

STEP THREE - DECIDING ON A GOAL AND IDENTIFYING POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS. Once the problem has been identified, then possible solutions can be developed. The primary question that needs to be asked and answered is "what do we want to achieve and how can we go about achieving it?" By working together and brainstorming a list of alternative solutions to the problem the team members will have several options that will enable them to choose a course of action with which they all can live. It will also enable them to determine what additional information, physical or human resources, skills or knowledge they will need to carry out the solution and what resources are essential to achieving the goal.

STEP FOUR - SELECTING AND IMPLEMENTING A COURSE OF ACTION. To make a decision about which course of action will be tried, the participants should decide which solution is most likely to get the desired results. Agreeing on a solution is not enough. The participants must try it out and test it to see if it will work. They must also give it enough time to see if the solution will work since behaviors cannot be changed and new skills learned over night.

STEP FIVE - EVALUATING THE RESULTS. Has the problem been resolved? Is there progress? If not - why not? Should we try another one of the alternatives? Should we ask for assistance from other sources? All of these are questions that will need to be addressed in order to assess the effectiveness of the process.

COMMUNICATION STYLES

PASSIVE/NON ASSERTIVE

AGGRESSIVE

ASSERTIVE/POSITIVE

STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION BETWEEN TEACHERS & PARAEDUCATORS

- ✓ **BE RECEPTIVE TO THE IDEAS AND CONCERNS OF PARAEDUCATORS**
- ✓ **ENCOURAGE PARAEDUCATORS TO ASK FOR CLARIFICATION OF INFORMATION AND INSTRUCTIONS, AND TO ASK FOR ASSISTANCE WHEN NEEDED**
- ✓ **RESPECT INDIVIDUALITY & DIFFERENCES IN BACKGROUNDS, VALUES & EXPERIENCES**
- ✓ **DEVELOP A SHARED VOCABULARY & SYSTEM OF NON-VERBAL CUES**
- ✓ **WORK TOGETHER TO CREATE A CLIMATE OF COOPERATION, TRUST, AND LOYALTY**

TEACHER CHARACTERISTICS AND PREFERENCES PARAEDUCATORS NEED TO KNOW

INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNIQUES & METHODS

SUPERVISORY STYLE

DISCIPLINE/BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

HOW TO USE TEACHING MATERIALS

CLASSROOM ORGANIZATION & RULES

LISTENING SKILLS

The following are suggested "dos" and "don'ts" that may help to make you a more effective listener.

DO

1. Be Receptive. Try to prevent bias, prejudice or anger from distorting what you hear. Be willing to listen to new ideas, to pay attention, to look for the speaker's meaning, and to encourage the speaker by looking at him or her.

2. Concentrate. Try to blot out distractions, such as noise, temperature or other environmental factors. Follow the thread of ideas, be alert for transitions from one thought to another.

3. Become Involved. Listen for personal pronouns, add information to what the speaker says, fill in gaps in his/her message, and maintain a mental running summary of the message.

4. Ask Questions. Clarify points by repeating or paraphrasing the speaker's ideas and invite him/her to clarify meanings.

DON'T

1. Be a Mind Reader. You will miss a great deal if you are trying to guess "what is this person really saying or thinking."

2. Be a Derailer. Changing the subject too quickly tells others that you are not interested in what they have to say.

3. Immediately Belittle or Discount another person's ideas.

4. Be a Placater. Agreeing with everything you hear just to be nice and avoid conflict will not help to strengthen the team.

BASIC STRATEGIES FOR CLEAR COMMUNICATION BETWEEN TEACHERS AND PARAEDUCATORS*

There are a number of elements that must be present in any situation to insure clear channels of communication among team members. Some are commonplace and things we take for granted. If the members of the team are not careful and do not address issues and concerns, positive communication can be inhibited. For example:

- The team must actively work together to create a climate of cooperation, trust, respect and loyalty. To accomplish this they must meet regularly and establish and maintain open channels of communication.

- Teachers, paraeducators, and other education personnel should actively seek to develop and share a common vocabulary.

- Teachers must make sure that directions and expectations are clearly understood and that paraeducators have the information and skills they require to perform their assigned tasks.

- Teachers should encourage paraeducators to ask for clarification or assistance if an assignment is not understood.

- Teachers should determine what special interests, talents, and training paraeducators have that will complement and enhance their own skills and improve the delivery of education services to children and youth.

- In addition to the day to day concerns teams must address, there are other factors that may influence team performance and interpersonal relationships. They may include but not be limited to: different points of view about education practices and strategies, different value systems, different cultural heritages, age, different levels of education and experiences. REMEMBER, the feelings of both teachers and paraeducators must be recognized, understood and appreciated. If team members do not deal openly and honestly with one another, barriers to forming effective partnerships will persist and become almost impossible to remove.

*Source: "A Training Program for Paraprofessionals Working in Special Education and Related Services" (Second edition, 1990). Center for Advanced Study in Education, Graduate School, City University of New York.

WHAT PARAEDUCATORS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT TEACHERS*

TEACHING STYLES. Teachers, like everyone else have unique characteristics and ways of doing things. These characteristics are rarely given much thought by the teacher because they are such an integral part of the individual's teaching style; but for paraeducators who are in support roles it is imperative that they know as much about these characteristics as possible. Without mutual awareness and understanding of how the teacher prefers to teach the effectiveness of the team can be undermined. Every teacher has a style of his or her own. The style may be flexible, controlling, permissive and/or a combination of all of these and more. Most teachers have an array of teaching strategies they like to use in a specific situation or with a specific student. They may be topic related, skill related or concept related. For other teachers structured behavior management methods may serve as the basic approach for teaching skills and helping students learn to monitor and maintain effective behavior. Some teachers may rely on self-instruction whereas others will rely on incidental types of learning centers or group or individual projects. No matter what method a teacher uses, it is important for paraeducators to know what teaching repertoires the teacher has chosen and the reasons why they are used with a specific group or an individual student.

SUPERVISORY STYLES. Just as teachers have unique teaching styles, they also have distinct supervisory styles. One person may be very structured and provide specific directions based on rules, procedures, program and classroom structures developed by the teacher. Another person may ask the paraeducator to share ideas and information and participate in the decision making/planning process. Still a third person may tend to be non-directive and prefer the paraeducator to learn by observing what the teacher does and then model the behavior.

DISCIPLINE STRATEGIES. Discipline is for most teachers something that they hold very close and very dear to themselves. How they discipline and why they discipline is known many times only to them. It is important for the paraeducator to understand why one student requires one disciplinary strategy and another with similar behaviors does not.

USE OF TEACHING MATERIALS. Teachers, almost like good mechanics, have their favorite tools. In the selection and use of instructional materials, teachers very often will rely more on one type of material than on another, even though either one might work in the particular learning situation. Like discipline, it is important for the paraeducator to know why that particular material was selected and is of value in a particular learning situation.

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*Adapted from: "A Training Program to Prepare Teachers to Supervise & Work Effectively With Paraprofessionals" (2nd Edition, 1989). New York. The NRC for Paraprofessionals in Education and Related Services.

CLASSROOM ORGANIZATION AND RULES. Both structure and rules are integral to the system of discipline and behavior management used in the classroom. Structure or a lack of it will very often determine the type of discipline that is used in the classroom. For example, an open classroom setting places considerably more responsibility on students to determine the course of their behavior than a very structured classroom setting does. The paraeducator needs to know why a particular structure has been chosen by the teacher, and why and how it complements the instructional delivery and/or processes.

The old adage that rules are made to be broken is not a procedure that is going to produce positive results in a classroom. The difficulty with rules is that some are formalized and written, other are informal and unwritten. It is the unwritten rule or unspoken rule that causes the most difficulty. Often times it is difficult for both paraeducators and students to comprehend fully what these rules are and how they are being applied.

INTER-PERSONAL PROBLEM SOLVING

I. **DEFINE**:

- The problem as one person sees it
- The problem as the other person sees it
- Develop a common or shared definition

II. **ASK**:

- Who is involved
- How are they involved
- What behaviors/attitudes of the different individuals need to be changed

III. **LIST**:

- Areas of mutual agreement concerning problems
- Areas of disagreement
- The barriers to finding a solution

IV. **DEVELOP**:

- A desired goal(s)
- A solution(s) by brainstorming various ideas
- A list of resources, information or assistance that will help you achieve the goal

V. **IMPLEMENT**:

- The solution for a specific time period and evaluate the effectiveness of the solution
- If necessary select and implement another alternative

TEACHER/PARAEDUCATOR COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL SKILLS INVENTORY*

This is not a test. This is a tool you can use to rate your ability to communicate/interact with co-workers, students, parents, and other people you come into contact with on-the-job. It is designed to help you assess your social skills, your ability to express your feelings, and to help you identify skills you would like to improve. Circle the number to the right of each item, which best describes how well you use a specific skill. When you have completed the inventory, review the various skills and think about those you feel are important to the way you perform your job. Choose three that you would like to improve and make a list of ways you can change these behaviors.

	fair		average	excellent	
1. Active listening	1	2	3	4	5
2. Starting a conversation	1	2	3	4	5
3. Asking for a favor	1	2	3	4	5
4. Giving a compliment	1	2	3	4	5
5. Accepting a compliment	1	2	3	4	5
6. Accepting criticism	1	2	3	4	5
7. Giving criticism	1	2	3	4	5
8. Apologizing	1	2	3	4	5
9. Giving instructions	1	2	3	4	5
10. Following instructions	1	2	3	4	5
11. Expressing your feelings	1	2	3	4	5

*Adapted from: "A Teacher Self-Assessment Inventory" developed by Linda Thurston, Associate Professor -Special Education, College of Education, Kansas State University, Manhattan.

	fair		average		excellent
12. Handling anger	1	2	3	4	5
13. Dealing with conflict	1	2	3	4	5
14. Problem solving	1	2	3	4	5
15. Standing up for your rights	1	2	3	4	5
16. Stating what you want	1	2	3	4	5
17. Stating an unpopular opinion	1	2	3	4	5
18. Saying no	1	2	3	4	5
19. Having a positive attitude	1	2	3	4	5
20. Asking questions	1	2	3	4	5
21. Completing tasks	1	2	3	4	5
22. Dealing with resistance	1	2	3	4	5

SITUATION 1

The Background

Mr. Franklin, the principal of a school where Sally Warren is an instructional paraeducator, believes that he has put together a terrific staff, who know one another, are interested in one another, and like one another. To enhance the esprit de corps he uses the loud speaker system to communicate to the staff all the latest news about them: who is going to take another job, who has received a new degree, who has contributed a good idea about improving the school. He begins this process by welcoming and introducing the new professional staff to the school at the beginning of the year so that a feeling of "togetherness" can be initiated and maintained. However, Mr. Franklin never acknowledges anyone other than teachers; not the custodians, not the cafeteria workers and not the instructional paraeducators. Nor are paraeducators or other support staff asked to participate in the school based management meetings—even though decisions are made that impact on their work. To make matters worse, the paraeducators are not allowed access to the "teachers lounge," nor do they have assigned mail boxes. Therefore they never receive announcements from the district about training or other resources available to paraeducators.

Sally has been at the school for six years. She is discussing Mr. Franklin's concept of communication with Joan Mitchell, the teacher she has been working with for the last three years. Joan is surprised to learn how upset Sally is and that she is thinking about marching into Mr. Franklin's office to let him have it. Role play the situation.

SITUATION 2

The Background

Martha Adams is a transition trainer assigned to work with a student placed as a part time employee in a mailroom in a large corporation. Mickey, the student, gets to work on time and performs most of his assignments without assistance. However, he does not stay on task, constantly asks unrelated questions and has other disruptive behaviors.

Mr. Jones, the supervisor at the worksite, feels that unless these behaviors change he will have to let Mickey go. Indeed, he is thinking about ending the participation of his company in the program altogether. Mickey is the third student to work in "his mailroom", and in general he feels it is more trouble than it is worth.

Martha has scheduled a meeting with Ruth Lowe, her supervising teacher, to discuss the problem. Mr. Jones has agreed to attend but he is fairly certain that it will not help. Role play the meeting.

SITUATION 3

The Background

Joan Curry has worked as a paraeducator for 22 years. She started out working as a playground and lunchroom monitor and for the last 15 years has worked as an instructional assistant in special education programs. She has seen teachers come and go. She is well liked by the students, teachers and other staff members.

This year she has been assigned to work with Gale Brewer - a new teacher. Things have not gone well between the two of them. The tasks Gale has assigned to Joan include supervising recess, setting up learning centers, making bulletin boards. Joan feels that she is not appreciated and has started to complain to the rest of the staff about Gale.

This is Gale's first job. While she was in college she was not prepared to supervise or work with another adult in the class - let alone someone who is old enough to be her mother with more than 20 years experience. She really feels that as the teacher she is responsible for and will be held accountable for everything that goes on in the class - the good and the bad. That is why after thinking it over, she has decided that it is important to establish herself as the person who is in charge of the class. It is not always easy because Joan is always making suggestions and telling her how other teachers do things. In fact, Joan can be a little intimidating. Now other teachers have started to tell her how lucky she is to have Joan work with her. Role play a meeting between the two of them.

SITUATION 4

The Background

Clara Martinez is a paraeducator in a preschool class that serves young children ages 3-5 with and without disabilities. She has worked in Head Start programs for several years and is the mother of a son who has mental retardation. And she speaks Spanish fluently. She was recruited by the principal to work in the class because of her understanding of the needs of children with disabilities and because several Hispanic children with special needs are enrolled in the class. In addition to the teacher there are two other paraeducators assigned to the class.

The teacher, Trudy Baker, has a Master's in Early Childhood Education but has never taught students who have disabilities. Despite Clara's understanding of the needs of students with special needs, Ms. Baker seems to rely on Josie and Caroline and ignore Clara's skills. The three of them have worked as a team for four years and are very close. In fact, it seems they can almost read each other's minds. The two other paraeducators take their lunch breaks together and frequently come back late. Role play a meeting among the team.

SITUATION 5

The Background

Georgette Brown is a new paraeducator in a high school industrial arts class. She has been a Girl Scout Leader and been active in the PTA. She and her husband are renovating their house so she has developed some good carpentry skills. When she started her job, the principal told her about the full inclusion program for students with disabilities they were starting in the school. When Georgette expressed concern about her ability to work with students with disabilities, she was told not to worry that Mr. Dobson, the teacher she would be working with would explain what he wanted her to do. This has never happened. In fact, most of the communication between them takes place in the class in front of the students, and Georgette feels this is undermining her ability to work with the students and maintain control of the class when Mr. Dobson must leave the room.

Ken Dobson is the teacher. This year for the first time since he started teaching 12 years ago he has been assigned an instructional paraeducator to assist him. This was done because of the district's decision to fully integrate students with disabilities into general education. Ken likes the challenge of working with students with disabilities, but he is not so sure that he likes working with another adult. Indeed, because he is very busy with extra curricular duties and working on a graduate degree he does not have time to meet with her regularly. He is a loner who has his own ways of doing things, and he feels that Georgette does not always follow his lead. Things are not going well in the class and Georgette seems to be having trouble with some of the students with challenging behavior. Role play a meeting between Ken and Georgette.

SITUATION 6

The Background

Barbara Sturm, has been working as a paraeducator for three years. For the first two years she worked with the same teacher in a special education class serving students with severe disabilities. This year she has been assigned to facilitate the inclusion of Liza McNees into a general education 4th grade class. She is now working with three teachers: Mildred McNair, the special education teacher she has worked with for the last two years; Jim O'Connor a physical education teacher; and Virginia Thompson, the fourth grade teacher.

Each of the teachers has a different teaching style, attitude about discipline and behavior management, and about classroom management. Things are going fairly well in the P.E. class. Mr. O'Connor has assigned a buddy to assist Liza with warm-up activities and make sure she follows the rules when they are playing games. Barbara is worried because she thinks Mr. O'Connor may be encouraging Liza to do more than she is capable of - especially in gymnastics. Barbara is concerned about it, because as she understands things she is responsible for Liza's safety. When she tries to discuss it with Mr. O'Connor, he laughs and tells her she is too serious and not to be a "Nervous Nelly."

Virginia Thompson is very pleasant, but never asks Barbara to share ideas about how best to work with Liza. In addition, she does not always follow Liza's instructional program the way it was designed by Mildred, and seems to resent it if Barbara makes suggestions. She has started to ask Barbara to work with some of the other students, and Barbara is not sure that is proper since Liza's IEP plainly states that Barbara is supposed to tutor her and does not mention any other students.

Mildred has always been very supportive of Barbara. Now when Barbara tries to share her concerns with her about how things are going in the P.E. program and the 4th grade class, she becomes very impatient and says there is nothing she can do since it is up to the other teachers to decide what happens in their class.

Barbara has become very frustrated because no one listens to her. She has asked for a meeting to see if she can clarify things. Role play the meeting.

SITUATION 7

The Background

Jonelle Smith has been teaching language arts and literature in a middle school for six years. During that time two things have happened that have caused the school district to employ paraeducators. The first is the increasing numbers of Cambodian immigrants who have moved into the community. And the second is related to a decision to include students with disabilities in general education programs. As a result Leah Pran has been employed to assist Jonelle. Leah is not only fluent in two Cambodian dialects, she is also a leader in the growing Cambodian community. While Leah spends most of her time with Cambodian students who have limited English she also works with students who have learning disabilities.

Jonelle is pleased that Leah is working in her classroom. Since neither of them has ever worked with students who are diagnosed as having severe learning disabilities, a special education teacher, Dimitri Nureyev, is part of the team. While he works directly with students from time to time, he is primarily available to consult with Jonelle and Leah.

At the beginning of the year, the 3 team members met together to discuss the goals for the entire class and the objectives for individual students. Both Jonelle and Dimitri encouraged Leah to share information about Cambodian culture and values they could build on to develop activities and curriculum content for students with limited English. Dimitri provided information about instructional strategies and behavior management techniques they could use to work with the students with learning disabilities. As a team, they also decided, that it would be helpful if Jonelle incorporated notes in her lesson plans for Leah to indicate how methods and content could be modified to accommodate needs of individual students. They also agreed, that while no time seemed to be available for all three of them to meet regularly, they could find time for informal chats and they would keep a joint log book with specific questions and requests for information and insight. Jonelle emphasized that she wanted Leah to discuss ideas she had for working with the students.

The team seemed to be off to a good start. They spoke to each other when they could and communicated regularly through the log book.

Lately, however, Jonelle has begun to notice that the parents of the Cambodian students seem to feel more comfortable speaking with Leah than with her. And while Jonelle has no problem sharing many activities and tasks with Leah, she believes that communicating with parents is the responsibility of the teacher and no one else.

Jonelle is really concerned about how to deal with her concerns. First, she is aware of Leah's position as a community leader. Second, and of even greater importance she is afraid she will hurt Leah's feelings if she asks her not to speak to the parents about their children or what goes on in the classroom unless she is present. And third, while district policy says that it is the responsibility of the teacher to involve parents in all aspects of their students' education, she is not sure Leah is aware of this.

Leah is also becoming concerned because her relationship with Jonelle seems to be changing. Until now Jonelle has always been warm and friendly and eager to share ideas and information with Leah. Now there are times when she is stand-offish or she snaps at Leah for no good reason.

Leah has mentioned her concerns to Dimitri. He suggests she speak directly to Jonelle. But Leah is afraid that if she says anything she will turn Jonelle off even more.

SITUATION 8

The Background

Betty Smithers works in an inclusive classroom serving students with and without disabilities. Some of the children are not toilet-trained and wear diapers. Betty has been told by the teacher, Susan Lerman, that it is the responsibility of the paraeducators to change the diapers. Betty's friend Ruth works in another classroom where the students have similar needs. However, the teacher in that classroom takes turns with Ruth and other paraeducators in changing diapers. Betty has tried speaking to Ms. Lerman about how she feels about always having to do the "dirty work" and has pointed out how another teacher deals with the problem. Susan's response is, "she has her way of doing things and I have my way." Betty is becoming frustrated and angry and has started to complain to other paraeducators. Susan is also becoming upset because she feels Betty is going behind her back and complaining to other people. The principal has called Betty and Susan to her office to discuss the problem. Role play the situation.

A PROBLEM SOLVING EXERCISE

1. Describe the problem from the paraeducator's point of view.

2. Describe the problem from the teacher's (or the other person's) point of view.

3. What behavior or attitude does the teacher or other person need to change?

4. What behavior or attitude does the paraeducator need to change?

5. Discuss and list ways they can work together to change the situation.

IMPROVING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE TEACHER/PARAEDUCATOR TEAMS

INSTRUCTIONS: Answering the following questions may help you to identify issues and concerns that confront your instructional team and to develop strategies for solving them.

1. Do you and your partner agree on the distinctions in teacher and paraeducator roles and responsibilities? If not, why not?

2. Briefly describe the strengths of the instructional team in your classroom. (What are the behaviors, attitudes and other factors that contribute to the effectiveness of the team?)

3. Briefly describe the problems that confront the instructional team in your classroom. (Are the problems created by differences in educational levels, philosophies, attitudes/values, teaching styles, supervisory styles, district and/or school policies and systems?)

4. What can my partner and I do to strengthen and improve the performance of the team? What will we need to change?

5. Do I/we need support or assistance from the principal, special education or Title I coordinators or other district personnel to achieve this objective?

INTEGRATING PARAEDUCATORS INTO THE TEAM

PLANNING - DIRECTING - DELEGATING

OVERVIEW

When Alice in Wonderland met the Cheshire Cat and asked it "which road she should take," the Cat responded by asking her "where she wanted to go". Alice's response was "it really didn't matter". To which the Cat replied "in that case it really didn't matter which road she took". This is an important lesson for all supervisory personnel, because if they do not know where they want to go, they cannot determine what skills and knowledge are required to perform a task, who should perform the task, how it should be done, where and when it should be performed, what equipment/materials are required to perform the task.

Teachers understand and appreciate the value of setting long range goals and short term objectives for students as the basis for developing individualized programs and group lesson plans. However, because teachers have not been trained to work with other adults as part of the instructional team, they rarely develop strategies for planning for and integrating paraeducators into program and administrative functions.

Without goals and a plan to achieve the goals, chaos and confusion may result rather than an orderly process that enables the members of the team to help students grow and develop.

INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES

Teachers will be able to:

1) Describe the value of planning specific tasks for paraeducators.

2) Describe the value of delegating appropriate tasks to paraeducators.

3) Identify responsibilities that may be appropriately delegated to paraeducators.

4) Improve methods of directing and monitoring the work of paraeducators.

EQUIPMENT AND MATERIAL REQUIRED

- An overhead projector and/or chalkboard or flipchart and easel.
- Transparencies.
- Copies of handouts and Exercises for all participants.

BEFORE THE TRAINING BEGINS

• Review the Background Material. Develop a brief lecture on the need to develop specific tasks and a schedule for the paraeducator to follow. Stress the need to know the educational background, experiential and skill levels of the paraeducator before deciding what a paraeducator can/cannot do.

• Prepare a second lecture on directing and monitoring the work of paraeducators and delegating tasks. Stress the distinctions in 1) delegating and sharing responsibility for a task, and 2) the need to avoid de facto delegation.

DURING THE TRAINING SESSION

¶ Deliver the lecture on the importance of developing and implementing a systematic plan for integrating paraeducators into the instructional process and administrative functions.

¶ Ask the trainees to work alone and make a list of specific information they would like to know about a paraeducator before they develop the plan.

¶ Ask for volunteers to share their lists and record the items on the chalkboard or flipchart.

¶ Divide the trainees into small groups of 6 or 7 (if they represent different programs and specialty areas organize the groups so they include as many different programs as possible). Ask some groups to make a list of different activities/functions that must be carried out to develop individualized and group lesson plans. Ask the remaining groups to make a list of the administrative tasks and functions that must be carried out by the team to support and ensure that the goals and objectives for the students are achieved.

¶ Ask for volunteers from the different groups to share their lists.

¶ Ask the groups to choose one function, discuss it and determine what skills a paraeducator would require to participate effectively in the activity. Ask for volunteers from several groups to share the results with all participants.

¶ Deliver the second lecture on directing the work of paraeducators and delegating tasks.

¶ Provide the trainees with an opportunity to discuss their concerns about delegating and sharing responsibility with paraeducators.

¶ Distribute the Exercise - To Delegate or Not to Delegate. Ask the trainees to complete the exercise individually. Then lead a discussion asking people to share their reasons for deciding which tasks could/should/should not be delegated to a paraeducator.

¶ Reconvene the groups and ask them to develop examples of inappropriate and de facto delegation, why and how it can happen, and how it can be avoided.

INTEGRATING PARAEDUCATORS INTO THE TEAM

PLANNING - DIRECTING - DELEGATING

PLANNING. The administrative and programmatic duties of both teachers and paraeducators are linked to achieving the education goals and objectives established for individual students and an entire class. The most important functions that must be carried out by the team include but are not limited to: assessing the developmental and functioning levels of all students, developing instructional objectives for individual students, designing and implementing curriculum activities to meet the objectives, evaluating the impact of the program on student performance, developing and maintaining a classroom environment that encourages learning, keeping records, material selection and preparation, ordering supplies and equipment and more.

For teachers to determine how best to integrate paraeducators into various elements of instruction and classroom management, teachers need to learn about the education background and work experience of the paraeducator, and any special interests and talents the paraeducator may have.

How teachers decide on what tasks to assign to paraeducators will depend on the management and instructional styles of individual teachers. Some teachers may include the paraeducator in the planning process. Other teachers may prefer to develop the plan alone and inform the paraeducator either orally or in writing about weekly and daily schedules, the duties the paraeducator will be expected to perform, and the materials required for various activities. Still other teachers may feel more comfortable asking the paraeducator to observe them as they demonstrate instructional strategies for working with individuals and small groups of students.

SUPERVISION AND MANAGEMENT. Of all the activities that comprise the process of management, directing and delegating are near the top of the list of tasks teachers are most likely to resist. For some teachers directing means "being a boss" or "giving orders." Others resist the idea of delegating because they fear losing control over the classroom, or because they truly believe that it is inappropriate to delegate responsibility for any part of the instructional process. It is not surprising that teachers are not comfortable directing or delegating. Traditionally the public, policymakers, teacher educators, nor teachers themselves have viewed these activities as part of a teacher's responsibilities. Implementation of the requirements established by the 1997 reauthorization of IDEA, that require state departments of education to establish standards for paraeducator supervision, is beginning to increase the awareness of the need to prepare teachers to carry out these tasks.

DIRECTING AND ASSIGNING TASKS. It is important for the teacher to understand how to select which tasks maybe appropriately delegated to paraeducators. In addition they must learn strategies for delegating tasks in order to avoid the pitfalls of de facto delegation or assigning inappropriate tasks to the paraeducator. Directions/assignments may be given orally, in writing, by demonstrating or a combination of all three. The key to giving effective directions is: to make sure that paraeducators comprehend what is expected of them.

Therefore, the teacher must take care to use clear terms and to determine whether or not the paraeducator understands what is expected. This may be accomplished by: a) asking the paraeducator to model the skills while the teacher observes, and b) encouraging the paraeducator to ask questions and share concerns about the nature of the assignment.

To carry out their assigned duties effectively paraeducators will need to know:

1. **WHY** it is necessary to perform this particular task (why it is important).
2. **WHAT** is needed to do the job (equipment, material).
3. **WHO** will be doing the job (the paraeducator, the teacher, or both the teacher and paraeducator).
4. **WHERE** the task will be performed.
5. **WHEN** the task will begin and end.
6. **HOW** the task will be performed (teaching methods, reinforcers, and other techniques).
7. **HOW** student progress will be monitored and assessed.
8. **HOW** the performance of the paraeducator will be monitored and assessed. (Evaluation and on-the-job coaching methods are covered more fully in a later unit.)

DELEGATING. Sometimes teachers will find it beneficial to delegate tasks. We have established that teachers have the overall responsibility for getting the teaching/learning job accomplished successfully. To do this teachers may require different levels of assistance to ensure that educational goals and objectives for students are achieved, data gathered and assessed about student functioning levels and performance, records maintained, and necessary supplies and equipment are available. Delegation means giving another person the responsibility for completing a task and using their own judgment as to whether the task has been performed properly. The delegator is, however, still responsible for the administration, oversight and conduct of the task.

It is critical that decisions to delegate tasks be made consciously and planned for. Otherwise de facto or inappropriate delegation is likely to occur. Both are common problems in the classroom and often lead to paraeducator or other support personnel performing tasks that are unfair to them and to the students. An example of an inappropriate assignment is asking a paraeducator to take full responsibility for preparing lesson plans to modify curriculum content or instructional strategies to meet the needs of an individual student. De facto delegation happens when a teacher allows a paraeducator to carve out his/her own place in the classroom by making decisions about what to do, how to do it, and when to do it. This happens frequently when a

paraeducator is asked to take responsibility for a student who is difficult to deal with while the teacher spends his/her time with students who "can really learn or benefit from the teacher's skills and knowledge." In fact this results in the assignment of the team member with the fewest skills to being the primary service provider for students with the greatest education needs. This is not meant to imply that paraeducators should not participate in modifying curriculum or instructional strategies, or provide individualized assistance to students with challenging behaviors. It does mean that planning and decision making must be carried out in cooperation with the teacher.

Some teachers may not feel comfortable delegating because they don't understand how to determine what to delegate, or the benefits of delegating. In addition, as noted previously, teachers may have, for a variety of reasons, real concerns about delegating any part of the instructional process. These blocks can and should be overcome because effective, appropriate delegation can assure:

1. That the paraeducator's existing skills will be used well.

2. That motivation will be improved.

3. That teachers will have more time for evaluating student needs, planning programs and assessing the results of the instruction on student performance.

4. That the teacher's time will be used more efficiently to the benefit of the students.

To determine which tasks a teacher might decide to delegate to a paraeducator the following questions need to be asked and answered:

1. Does the paraeducator have the skills required to perform a task (e.g. teach a lesson, use a checklist to gather data, write an anecdotal report, supervise independent study, train peer tutors etc.?)

2. How can I ensure that the paraeducator has the necessary skills?

3. Am I ready to give the paraeducator the necessary authority to perform the task?

4. Have I determined how I will monitor and assess the paraeducator's performance?

5. Am I avoiding de facto or inappropriate delegation?

QUESTIONS TEACHERS NEED TO ASK AND ANSWER ABOUT GIVING DIRECTIONS

DO I KNOW WHAT FUNCTIONS I EXPECT THE PARAEDUCATOR TO PERFORM IN THE CLASSROOM?

WHEN I ASSIGN A TASK TO THE PARA-EDUCATOR DO I DESCRIBE:

- ✔ **WHAT IS TO BE DONE**
- ✔ **WHY IT NEEDS TO BE DONE**
- ✔ **WHAT MATERIALS WILL BE NEEDED**
- ✔ **WHO WILL BE DOING THE JOB (THE TEACHER, THE PARAEDUCATOR OR BOTH THE TEACHER AND THE PARAEDUCATOR)**
- ✔ **HOW I WANT IT TO BE DONE**
- ✔ **WHERE THE TASK WILL BE PERFORMED**
- ✔ **HOW STUDENT PERFORMANCE WILL**

BE MONITORED AND ASSESSED

TRANSPARENCY-2

QUESTIONS TEACHERS NEED TO ASK AND ANSWER ABOUT DELEGATING TASKS

HAVE I ASKED MYSELF IF THE PARAEDUCATOR IS READY TO TAKE ON THE RESPONSIBILITY?

AM I PREPARED TO GIVE THE PARAEDUCATOR THE NECESSARY AUTHORITY TO PERFORM THE TASK?

HAVE I DETERMINED HOW I WILL MONITOR THE PERFORMANCE OF THE PARAEDUCATOR?

DO I AVOID <u>DE FACTO</u> AND <u>INAPPROPRIATE</u> DELEGATION?

TO DELEGATE OR NOT TO DELEGATE

DIRECTIONS. The following are representative of some (but not all) of the programmatic and administrative activities teachers are responsible for. Place a **D** after the tasks you feel can appropriately be delegated to a paraeducator. (For the purpose of this activity, do not make your decision on whether or not the task can be shared with a particular paraeducator.) Be prepared to discuss your reasons for deciding which tasks can/should be delegated.

TASK	**DELEGATE**
1. Diagnosing learning problems and evaluating functioning levels.	
2. Developing behavior management strategies for individual students.	
3. Implementing behavior management objectives.	
4. Determining instructional objectives.	
5. Modifying lessons/instructional strategies for individual students.	
6. Selecting instructional material.	
7. Demonstrating the use of materials or equipment.	
8. Planning daily and weekly schedules.	
9. Assessing the effectiveness of instructional techniques or methods.	
10. Reviewing lessons and reenforcing learning with small groups.	
11. Administering and scoring standardized tests.	
12. Interpreting test results.	

TASK	DELEGATE
15. Teaching new concepts.	
16. Observing, recording and charting data.	
17. Evaluating data on student performance.	
18. Arranging learning centers and preparing bulletin boards.	
19. Developing materials for use in specific instructional programs.	
20. Supervising students in community learning activities and vocational training.	
21. Scheduling and coordinating the work of volunteer personnel/peer tutors, etc.	
22. Filing student records.	
23. Keeping attendance records.	
24. Ensuring that adaptive equipment and instructional materials are maintained in good working order.	
25. Inventorying and ordering supplies	

EVALUATING AND COACHING

OVERVIEW

An examination of teachers' daily schedules and responsibilities finds that in addition to setting goals, planning, organizing, and coordinating activities for the students, themselves and para-educators, they also monitor and assess how everything is working and determine what changes in instructional programs or classroom organization need to be made to achieve identified goals. The content and activities in this unit are designed to prepare teachers to: 1) observe, monitor and assess the performance of paraeducators, 2) provide positive feedback about performance and 3) develop methods and procedures to provide on-the-job coaching for a paraeducator.

INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES

The teacher will be able to:

1) Evaluate and monitor on-the-job performance of paraeducators in order to identify skills that need to be improved.

2) Describe characteristics of adult learners.

3) Use this information to develop systematic on-the-job training procedures for improving the performance of a paraeducator.

EQUIPMENT AND MATERIALS REQUIRED

To conduct the activities in this unit you will need:

- A flipchart and easel or chalkboard.

- An overhead projector and screen or if you prefer write the information contained in the transparencies on the easel or chalkboard.

- Copies of the handouts and exercises for all the participants.

BEFORE THE TRAINING

- Obtain copies of your school district's/agency's administrative regulations, evaluation forms and other guidelines connected with evaluating paraeducators and the responsibilities of teachers in this process. (If the district has standards for evaluating paraeducators you may want to make a handout or transparency that includes the information.)

• Review the trainer material, and use it and the local guidelines to develop a lecture on evaluating and monitoring the skills and work of paraeducators. Stress the fact that although teachers may not be designated as participants in the formal evaluation process, they are frequently asked to provide information to the principal or other supervisor about the performance of a paraeducator. In addition, in many districts or agencies teachers provide much of the training received by paraeducators in the form of on-the-job coaching, thus they require skills that will enable them to identify strengths and training needs of paraeducators.

• Develop a brief lecture on characteristics of adult learners and procedures the teacher can build on to coach paraeducators.

DURING THE SESSION

¶ Deliver the lecture on evaluating and monitoring on-the-job performance of paraeducators.

¶ Ask the participants to share their concerns and feelings about teacher involvement in both formal and informal evaluation and on-the-job coaching activities. Address these concerns during the various activities that follow.

¶ Distribute copies of guidelines and procedures for assessing paraeducators.

¶ Distribute Exercise 1 "What is Your Learning Style". Column One indicates a preference for visual learning. Column Two indicates a preference for auditory/oral methods. And Column Three indicates a preference for learning by doing. Lead a discussion of how preferred learning styles influence adult learners and the impact this may have on the instructional strategies the teacher might select to provide on-the-job coaching.

¶ Deliver the lecture on characteristics of adult learners and procedures teachers can use to coach paraeducators. Distribute Handouts 1 through 5 and briefly describe the contents.

¶ Divide the trainees into small groups of 5 or 6 and ask them to select a task they want to teach a paraeducator to carry out in the classroom. Examples might include but not be limited to: using objective observation techniques to gather information about a student, teaching a lesson, maintaining confidentiality, and keeping records. Ask the group to discuss how they would decide whether the paraeducator is ready to learn the new skill, describe what strategies they would use to prepare paraeducators to undertake the task, and determine whether the paraeducator has mastered the skills required to perform the task.

EVALUATING AND COACHING

THE PROCESS OF EVALUATION. Some school districts and other service providers have developed procedures and criteria for conducting formal evaluations of paraeducators. Most have not. Agencies that have developed guidelines use various methods to conduct evaluations. In some cases teachers are part of the evaluation process, in other circumstances they may be asked by the building principal or other supervisory personnel to participate informally. Evaluation is much easier to perform if supervisors remember the following: placing blame or criticizing is not the purpose of evaluation. Its aim is to help the person being evaluated to do a better job. Effective evaluations and performance reviews include the following components:

- ✔ Job requirements and skills to be evaluated must be clearly defined and communicated to paraeducators.
- ✔ Skills must be observable and standards for determining whether or not they have been performed successfully must be measurable.
- ✔ Positive feedback about the results of an evaluation is an invaluable tool for correcting problems, and conveying recognition of the contributions the paraeducator make to the overall program.
- ✔ Informal monitoring and positive feedback on a regular basis will enable paraeducators to practice and strengthen skills learned during inservice and continuing education programs in a systematic manner and will improve the productivity of the team.
- ✔ Results of structured evaluations will enable supervisors to develop strategies for on-the-job coaching that will supplement more formal training programs for paraeducators including preservice, inservice, and continuing education.

COMPONENTS OF EVALUATION. The process of evaluation can be broken down into four components: pre-observation, observation, analysis, and coaching.

- ✔ The **PRE-OBSERVATION** component includes: 1) defining the skill area to be evaluated, 2) establishing standards for assessing the performance, and 3) selecting or constructing an observation checklist. Program and administrative functions that take place in the classroom can be used as the basis for defining the skills, establishing criteria, and developing checklists. (See Handout 1 for a sample observation checklist.)

- ✔ The **OBSERVATION** component is a single step procedure of actually observing the performance and recording the results (using a checklist if available).

- ✔ The **ANALYSIS** component includes: 1) looking at and analyzing the results of the observation, 2) deciding what skills need to be strengthened, or 3) determining whether or not to assign or delegate more complex tasks to a paraeducator.

- ✔ The **COACHING** component includes three steps: 1) developing strategies for providing systematic on-the-job coaching, 2) conducting the training activities, and 3) evaluating the effectiveness of the training. (See Handout 2 for strategies teachers can use to provide on-the-job coaching to paraeducators.)

CHARACTERISTICS OF ADULT LEARNERS. In order to develop an effective approach to coaching paraeducators, it is important for teachers or other supervisors to be aware of the various ways adults learn. Over the last decade several researchers have increased our awareness of how adults learn. Their findings are synthesized below.

- ✔ Adults are motivated to learn based on their career needs and/or other interests that learning will satisfy. The needs and interests individuals express are appropriate starting points for planning what to teach and what methods to use. Effective learning must build on current competencies and readiness to learn. Teachable moments peak at those points when learning opportunities are coordinated with a recognition of the need-to-know.

- ✔ Life and work experiences are the richest and best sources for adult learning; as individuals mature they accumulate a growing reservoir of experiences and knowledge which serve as a basis for new learning. Analyses of prior work, volunteer and other experiences should be used by both trainers and adult learners to develop pro-grams that meet the needs of adult learners.

- ✔ Individual differences among people increase with age and developmental changes in thinking are reflected in problem-solving, critical thinking, and creativity, therefore, adult education must provide for differences in learning styles, time required for mastery, the place where learning will occur and pace of learning.

- ✔ Adults learn best when they are active participants in a task. They like to try out what is being taught, therefore, coaching sessions should provide for active involvement of paraeducators and enable them to practice the skills they are learning.

COACHING. It is hard to know where feedback about the results of evaluations ends and coaching or training begins. Coaching and monitoring the performance of paraeducators must be a continuing process. One of most important factors in assuring that systematic coaching takes place is for the teacher and paraeducator to establish a specific time to meet. (Often, this is easier said than done because of the time constraints that confront the instructional team.) During these regularly scheduled meetings, many topics and concerns should be discussed including but limited to:

- ✔ Schedules and rules.
- ✔ Ethical and professional responsibilities of team members.
- ✔ Instructional and non-instructional duties the paraeducator will be expected to perform.
- ✔ Long and short term goals for individual students and the plans for achieving them.
- ✔ Behavior management or disciplinary systems to be used with each student.
- ✔ Plans for dealing with emergencies of an emotional or physical nature.
- ✔ Lesson plans for the entire class and instructional modifications required to meet needs of individual students.
- ✔ How to use instructional materials or adaptive equipment.
- ✔ Standards for assessing the paraeducator's on-the-job performance.

See Handouts 3 and 4 for lists of additional topics the team should review before school opens and throughout the year.

THE PROCESS OF EVALUATION

- ✔ **PRE-OBSERVATION ACTIVITIES**
- ✔ **STRUCTURED SYSTEMATIC OBSERVATION**
- ✔ **ANALYSIS**
- ✔ **COACHING**

SAMPLE OBSERVATION CHECKLIST: EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Date:_____

RATING GUIDE:
1= EXCELLENT
2= VERY GOOD
3= AVERAGE
4= BELOW AVERAGE
5= POOR
6= NO OPPORTUNITY TO OBSERVE

Does the Paraeducator

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Give good/clear directions?						
2. State clearly what the student is expected to do?						
3. Follow the lesson plans developed by the teacher?						
4. Teach sequentially?						
5. Stay on task?						
6. Use appropriate prompts to stimulate responses?						
7. Provide reinforcement in a timely and consistent manner and use praise effectively?						
8. Maintain control of the instructional situation?						
9. Prepare instructional materials prior to s starting the lesson?						
10. Use a varied portfolio of instructional activities suggested by teacher?						
11. Measure performance against objectives established by teacher?						
12. Maintain accurate records?						

Comments:

_____

_____

_____

SUGGESTIONS FOR MONITORING AND COACHING PARAEDUCATORS

On-the-job coaching and monitoring of paraeducators should be an on-going process. Neither the teacher nor the paraeducator learns everything they need to know and remember at once. It is critical for the teacher and paraeducator to schedule a specific time to get together (no matter how difficult it may seem to be) to discuss job assignments, instructional techniques, ethical responsibilities and other issues that affect the instruc-tional programs and classroom organization. Some of the strategies teachers may use to coach and monitor the performance of paraeducators include:

- ✔ Reviewing long and short terms goals for each student and the individualized program designed to achieve them.
- ✔ Describing and demonstrating the type of behavior management and disciplinary systems to be used with each student.
- ✔ Reviewing plans for dealing with emergencies of an emotional or physical nature.
- ✔ Demonstrating skills or activities to the paraeducator prior to introducing new lessons or content areas for the class or an individual student. Ask the paraeducator to practice skills while you observe and make suggestions.
- ✔ Demonstrating various reinforcers, prompts, cues and other instructional pro-cedures that will be used in the classroom.
- ✔ Encouraging the paraeducator to ask questions. If the paraeducator indicates a need for more information in any area, follow through by obtaining printed information on the subject, or asking resource personnel and other support staff to demonstrate techniques for the paraeducator.

SOME KEY TOPICS TO BE DISCUSSED BY THE TEAM AT THE BEGINNING OF THE YEAR

The initial conference should create a climate of trust between the paraeducator and teacher that will allow the paraeducator to feel free to ask questions and seek assistance from the teacher. It should introduce the paraeducator to the teacher, students, and classroom organization and rules. Among the topics that should be discussed at the first meeting of the team are:

- Finding out about the paraeducator: What is his/her previous work experience, volunteer experience, does s/he have any special skills/talents, interests?
- Overview of the teacher's short and long range plans for the class.
- Review of the daily and weekly schedules.
- Discussion of lesson plan formats.
- Discussion of procedural matters (discipline, rules, role of the paraeducator in the class.)
- Discussion of the paraeducator's concerns and questions.
- Discussion of evaluation standards and procedures that will be used to assess the paraeducator's performance.

SUGGESTED TOPICS TO BE DISCUSSED DURING ON-GOING COACHING SESSIONS

The topics selected for each session will vary. The teacher and paraeducator should identify specific topics that they consider to be of high priority as the team changes and progresses in their performance level. Some general topics that can be handled well through structured on-the-job coaching are:

- Individualized Education Plans
- Lesson Planning (Long and Short Range Plans)
- Modifying Curriculum Content and Instructional Activities
- Teaching Strategies, Techniques & Characteristics
- Student Progress-Evaluation
- Behavior Maintenance & Management Procedures
- Parent-Teacher Conferences
- Classroom Management
- Materials & Resources
- Maintaining Student Records Including Cumulative Records
- School-Community Events
- Legal, Ethical & Professional Responsibilities of the Paraeducator Stressing Confidentiality
- Objective Observation Skills
- Data Gathering

WHAT IS YOUR LEARNING STYLE*

I.	II.	III.
___ I like to keep written records	___ I prefer to hear instructions	___ I like to build things
___ I make lists of things to do	___ I review for a test by reading notes aloud or by talking with others	___ I like to take things apart and put them back together to see what makes them work
___ I typically read billboards while driving	___ I talk aloud when working a math problem	___ I can distinguish items by touch when blindfolded
___ I follow written recipes	___ I prefer listening to a cassette over reading the same material	___ I learned the touch system rapidly in typing
___ I review for a test by writing a summary	___ I commit a Zip Code to memory by saying it	___ Gestures are a very important part of my communication style
___ I can put a bicycle together using only the written directions provided	___ I call on the telephone to compliment a friend instead of writing a note	___ I move with music
___ I commit a Zip Code to memory by writing it	___ I plan the upcoming week by talking it through with someone	___ I doodle and draw whenever paper is available
___ I use visual images to remember names	___ I like to stop at a service station for oral directions in a strange city	___ I am an "out-of-doors" person
___ I am a "bookworm"	___ I prefer talking-listening games	___ I like to express myself through dancing
___ I write a note to compliment a friend	___ I keep up on news through the radio	___ I spend a large amount of time on crafts/handwork
___ I keep up on the news through the paper	___ I use "free" time for talking with others	___ I like to feel the texture of furniture/ clothes
___ I prefer written directions		___ I prefer active sports to games where one sits
___ I prefer to get a map and find my own way in a strange city		___ I like to use my "free" time for physical activities
___ I prefer reading-writing games like "Scrabble"		
___ I do crossword puzzles and play "Wheel of Fortune"		

*Adapted from "Checklist for Discovering Learning Channels" by Dr. Paul Welter (original source unknown.

PLANNING FOR CHANGE
(A FINAL ACTIVITY)

OVERVIEW

As a result of participating in these training sessions, the teachers have been given a lot of information about strategies they can use to improve their performance as classroom managers. The purpose of this final activity is to enable each trainee to develop and implement a personalized plan for changing and improving his/her management skills.

INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES

The teacher will:

1) Identify a supervisory skill s/he wants to improve.

2) Develop a specific goal(s) to meet the identified needs.

3) Develop systematic strategies to achieve the goal(s) and

4) Develop evaluation criteria and set timeliness for achieving the goal(s).

MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT

To conduct the activities in this unit you will need:

- Handout -1 "Planning Worksheet"

- The Performance/Skills Survey completed earlier by the trainees.

BEFORE THE TRAINING BEGINS

- Distribute a copy of the Worksheet to each of the participants. Ask them to use the results of their Performance/Skills Survey completed earlier to determine the skill(s) they want to improve. Then, using the worksheet, develop the strategies they will use to achieve their goal. Ask the participants to complete the plan at home and return it to you. Schedule a mutually convenient time for you to observe the trainee and provide feedback based on your observations, or

- If the training schedule does not allow enough time for observations and follow-up, ask the participants to complete the Worksheet during the final class and share their goals and plans with you and the other trainees.

PLANNING WORKSHEET

DIRECTIONS. Review your responses to the items on the "Performance/Skills Inventory" you completed at the beginning of the training. Choose one skill area you want to improve. Use the steps outlined on this Planning Worksheet to develop a plan for increasing your supervisory or management skills. Respond to each item as fully as you can; that is, respond as if you were writing this so another person would become as completely aware of the problem as you are; this means being frank, honest, and open with yourself.

I. Identify a supervisory skill you would like to improve and describe it (e.g., planning, directing, delegating, on-the-job coaching, evaluating).

II. How will this skill improve the effectiveness of the instructional team? (e.g., increase awareness of distinctions in team roles, improve communication, increase availability of personalized instruction for students)

III. How will this skill improve the organization and operation of your classroom?

IV. What are some of the steps (strategies) you will use to achieve the objective?

V. What resources/assistance (planning time, information about district policies and criteria for supervising paraeducators, administration support) will you need to achieve the objective?

V. Describe how you will determine whether or not the solution(s) have worked.

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